

February 20, 2017

To the Honorable Governor Dannel Malloy and the Connecticut General Assembly:

I am writing to express my concerns about the proposed cuts to the Connecticut State Library funding, specifically the possibility of eliminating the borrowIT CT program permanently.

I have worked in public libraries in Connecticut for over five years. I know first-hand how much people depend on quality library services. I have already seen the adverse effects of reduced funding to library services such as borrowIT CT. Eliminating or reducing the budget of the borrowIT CT program would negatively affect the quality of life of everyone in Connecticut.

The borrowIT CT program allows anyone with a public library card to access materials from any public library in the state free of charge. Patrons can travel to public libraries in other towns to use their services. Also, materials can be sent from one public library to another for patrons' use. This is important because, of course, not every library can own every book or subscribe to every database. The borrowIT CT program allows libraries to share resources throughout the state.

The most recent cuts in the borrowIT CT program have made it more difficult for patrons to access these services. I currently work at the Huntington Branch Library in Shelton, CT. Deliveries in Shelton have dropped from five days per week to two days per week, lengthening the time patrons must wait for their materials. Also, it has become much more difficult for patrons to obtain materials from libraries outside their home library's consortium. For example, Bibliomation is a library consortium that includes Shelton as well as about 70 other public libraries. In the past, if patrons needed something from a library that was not a Bibliomation member, patrons could easily request that material via inter-library loan. While this is still possible, it is more difficult due to recent cuts in the State Library budget.

Without borrowIT CT, patrons who need access to materials outside their home library will be unfavorably impacted. In order to provide the services covered by borrowIT CT, public libraries may be forced to cut other important services they now provide such as on-line database subscriptions and other reference services, as well as educational programs for all ages. Patrons may have to pay to have materials from another library sent to their home library. Or, they may have to physically drive to the library to access materials, and again, they may have to pay a fee to borrow materials from an outside library. Even worse, patrons may not be able to borrow materials from an outside library at all.

Losing borrowIT CT is more than an inconvenience for library patrons. The borrowIT CT program is one of the more visible services libraries provide the public. Many patrons have already noticed previous cuts to borrowIT CT. Public libraries provide much more than popular novels and movies. Public libraries help keep the public informed, and allow patrons free access to information that can improve their lives. Now, more than ever, it is imperative to ensure the public has free access to information provided by library materials as well as databases purchased with library funding. If we continue to cut funding to valuable library services, everyone will suffer.

Sincerely yours,

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